

MP 105

MEMORANDUM

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Subject: Selected Intelligence on Highway Transport in Eastern Siberia

Yakuttrans, the Yakut Transport Organization, is in charge of the motorized transport along the Angara-Lena Highway, which carries supplies exclusively for the city of Yakutsk and for the farmers and trappers of the Yakutsk region. Reportedly this area in 1947 was closed East and North of Irkutsk to all persons except those sent there by government agencies for specific assignments. The organization is equipped with its own vehicles, machine shops, garages, and a Diesel power station. We regard this information as probably true.

Another report which we regard as probably true states that Zolototrans, a transport organization supplying the gold regions, is in charge of motorized transport to the gold regions along the Angara-Lena highway, the Aldan highway, the road from Ust'-Aldan to Verkhoyansk, the road from Batilinsk to the town of Oshotsk, the winter road from Yakutsk to Churan, and the winter road from Yakutsk to Okhotskiy Perevoz. It handles horse-drawn transport between Okhotskiy Perevoz and Allakh-Yun, between Batilinsk and Allakh-Yun, and between Allakh-Yun and all the gold fields of the Allakh-Yun regions. It also handles reindeer transport from the Aldan re-loading point to Verkhoyansk. Another report which we regard as possibly true states that Zolototrans has its own vehicles (mostly 3-ton trucks with 2-ton trailers), vehicle repair shops, garages, fuel dumps, winter hotels for drivers, stables, and a power station in Zayarsk.

Oblpotrebsoyuz, the Regional Consumers Union, is in charge of horse and reindeer transport which carry supplies within the farming regions around Yakutsk. The organization in 1947 had its own supply depots, warehouses for the fur delivered by trappers, and winter hotels for drivers. This we believe to be possibly true.

A report that we have not been able to evaluate says that on the bank of the Angara River, below the town of Zayarsk, there are about 20 warehouses belonging to three organizations: Yakuttrans and Zolototrans, the two mentioned above, and Sevnorput, which supplies the Siberian Arctic. Next to the warehouses is Neft'baza, a large gasoline and crude oil dump, from which fuel is shipped to the Yakut SSR. However, a report confirmed by other sources says that the fuel is shipped in barges from Irkutsk to the Zayarsk dump, and from there is transhipped in standard 200 liter drums on trucks along the Angara-Lena highway to Ust'-Kut, the next reloading point.

The Angara River was reported in 1947 to be open for navigation from the middle of May to the end of November. After the close of navigation the only supply route open between Zayarsk and the railroad was a winter road from Zayarsk via Bratsk to the rail line at Tulun. This road goes mostly through open country and is often blocked by heavy snows. It cannot be used during the summer because the region through which it runs is swampy. This is confirmed by other sources.

The road between Ust'-Kut and Osetrovo is a continuation of the Angara-Lena route, although not as good a road as the latter, even though it is of crush rock (1947 information). No road was reported between Osetrovo and Aizensk, and in winter the only means of communication between the two towns was the mail carried on horseback along the river bank. We regard this as probably true. On the road between Ust'-Kut and Osetrovo a large gasoline and oil dump was reported seen in 1947 which belonged to the Yakut Republic. Fuel was then kept in the open in 200 liter cans with operations being conducted on a 24 hour schedule. We are not able to judge this information.

In 1945 several sources reported the Never-Tommot-Yakutsk highway as being a good all-weather road, capable of heavy cross-country traffic. The road alignment from Never is almost due north through Mayorny, Aldan, Tommot, Nalbagar and

hence to Yakutsk. Weather conditions along the route are as follows: January and February temperature drops to minus 52°C with a clear, dry cold; March and first half of April has some snow but at the end of April snow begins to melt; however, intermittent snow and rain continues until the beginning of May; second half of May warmer and somewhat dry; June and July rather hot and dry with a south wind; August is warm; September mostly rain with beginning of cold weather at end of month; October beginning of heavy snow fall; November and December snow storms. During the months of heavy snow, the roads are often blocked due to lack of mechanical snow clearing equipment. This information is confirmed by other sources.

In 1947, a large gasoline dump was reported on the southern outskirts of Aldan. It was stored in open tanks with a capacity of 70 tons. This dump is reported to supply all the refueling stations along the Aldan highway, to which gasoline is carried in 200 liter drums. This is regarded as possibly true.

Also regarded as possibly true is a report that stated that in 1937, the construction of a winter road from Ust'-Aldan to Verkhoyansk along the Dulgalakh River was started. Since the region is rocky it was necessary to cut a passage through the rocks and to clear the banks of the river. In 1940 the road was opened for traffic. It runs partly on the banks of the river and partly on the ice of the Dulgalakh and crosses the Verkhoyanskiy mountain range. In 1947 there were no vehicle repair shops nor gasoline dumps along the road; trucks travelled in convoy and carried a supply of fuel with them, as well as equipment for small repairs and snowplows for road clearance work.

Ust'-Aldan, situated at the junction of the Aldan and Lena Rivers, is a trans-loading point for river freight destined for towns located off the river banks. Most supplies brought to Ust'-Aldan by barges and freighters are transhipped to either Verkhoyansk by road or Okhotsky Perevoz and Allakh-Yun by the Aldan River.

Vehicle repair and maintenance shops and fueling facilities are found at Ust'-Aldan. This we regard as possibly true also.

At Okhotskiy Perevoz, supplies are again transloaded this time to truck and shipped to the town of Okhotsk over a winter road, which is impassable in summer because of the swamps. From the Allakh-Yun reloading point, supplies are shipped to Okhotsk on gas generator trucks (in 1947) during the winter. Supplies are also transferred in Batilinsk and are then dispatched to the town of Allakh-Yun (not to be confused with the Allakh-Yun reloading point). In Batilinsk there are maintenance shops for gas generator trucks. This also is regarded as possibly true.

The primary mode of transport in the Kolyma region is the motor vehicle. In 1941 the number of trucks was already 2,000, several with trailers. In 1946 the number of trucks had increased to 12,000. This information cannot be judged. For motor transport, which is carried on day and night throughout the year, a two-lane crushed rock road was constructed from Magadan to Srednikan. Notwithstanding the snowstorms and cold weather, the traffic is believed to be heavy. At distances of 100-150 kilometers all along the road there were first class repair shops and gas depots in 1949. Up to 1936 the road extended to the Kolyma River; when the wooden bridge across the river was completed, the road was continued to Indigirka, which it reached in 1939. In 1942-3 it was extended to Upper Lena and connected with the road north from Kever at Yakutsk. All the towns along the Okhotsk Sea coast are also connected by a road which was finished in 1946. Lately there has been considerable work done on the road from Magadan to the Chukotsk Peninsula. This information is confirmed by other sources.

Another road from Magadan is one reported in 1952 to lead to a place called "Naval Port" and referred to as the Gertner Highway. The road is eight meters wide with a foundation of hard rock, over which dirt and ballast were spread to a thickness of approximately 20 cm. The route consisted of many sharp, blind curves and at these points it had been widened to 10 meters. The type of vehicles observed

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to be using this road was normally 4-ton trucks carrying ammunition from a warehouse to some unknown destination north of Magadan. On an average, ten to twelve 4-ton trucks passed by during the day from 0800 to 1700 hours, however, during the night traffic seemed to be twice as heavy with the majority being 8 and 10-ton trucks. It should be noted that the position of the observed may have been different during the day, thus affecting the count and estimated size of the trucks. We regard this as possibly true. Total distance from Magadan to the Port was 13 kilometers.

The only vehicle road in the area of Ege Khaya leads from the town to Balagannakh, a distance of 18 kilometers. Trucks and sleds are the only vehicles reported using this road, which has a hard-packed surface of only one lane. Probably true.

A report confirmed by other sources states that the Magadan-Yakutsk is the only road connecting Magadan with the interior of the Kolyma territory. We regard as possibly true rumors which reported in 1950 that a road branches off this highway to the south, through which a year round transport route is kept open to as far south as Vladivostok. Generally the highway averages 8-10 meters in width and is invariably wide enough for two large trucks. As far as informants knew, there were in 1949 no paved stretches on this road, which is generally compact dirt reinforced somewhat with gravel. Permanent road crews are employed to keep the road open throughout the year. When the snow thaws, frequent stretches of mud bogs down traffic but great effort is reported to remedy all such links in the road. The route is a winding one, which keeps the speed of traffic down to a maximum of 30-40 km/hr for even lighter vehicles. Wooden bridges, of two lane width, crosses most streams. No tunnels have been reported. Gasoline depots are located at frequent intervals. No information is available on vehicle repair facilities.

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We regard as probably true a report which states that in the Yakutsk area, no paved roads were observed by available sources except in the immediate vicinity of the town itself. From the improved road running east from Yakutsk to Churapcha, one trail goes on across the mountains to Okhotsh and meets the coastal trail from there to Magadan. Another branches northeast around the end of the Verkhoyansk Mountain Range to Oymyakon on the Indigirka River, then loops north along the river and down to meet the west branch of the Magadan track road at Khudzhakh, in the south end of the Cherakiy range, and about 250 road miles from Magadan. By either route the total distance from Magadan to Yakutsk is 750 miles at least; by the northern route it could well be as much as 850.

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